By Jan Rahn
Managing Editor

There will be a new face along the gridiron this fall to coach the Plainsmen.

Coach Chip Kay has accepted a superintendent position at Shelby-Rising City.

Since 2007, Kay has been at the helm of Perkins County Schools' successful football team—coaching will not be a part of the new role he steps into effective July 1.

"I have received a lot of questions about coaching because it has been a big part of my career—I am hanging it up," said Kay. "I have coached one or more sports for 22 years and feel strongly about the core values that athletics teaches. I hope I can instill that through my new role."

Kay, who is also the current activities director, assistant principal and technology director at Perkins County Schools, officially resigned during a special board meeting on Friday, Jan. 18, which enabled the board at Shelby-Rising City to pursue necessary contracts on their end. He will finish his contract with Perkins County on May 31.

Although Kay has had his education specialist degree since December 2009, he said he did not pursue many superintendent positions because he was happy and content with his role at Perkins County Schools.

He said there were a few openings in other schools this year that aligned with his administrative strengths, and after interviewing at Shelby-Rising City, the number of similarities to Perkins County were evident—including enrollment.

Kay said his new school will complete year two of a consolidation this spring.

"Ironically, I came to PCS in year three of the consolidation—I will do the same there," he said.

Also similar to Perkins County is the separation of the school district—the elementary and high school are in Shelby and the middle school is seven miles away in Rising City. Both communities are approximately 700-800 in population and their district enrollment is very similar.

Kay said next year both PCS and Shelby-Rising City will have identical NSAA enrollments as C2 school districts. Student population varies only slightly. Kay's new position will be in a district of 320 students; Perkins County will be around 400.

"They are not as far alongwith technology as PCS, so when I was offered the position it appealed to me because of their goals with technology and overall similarity to here," said Kay.

He said his initial goal will be to improve the educational technology at Shelby-Rising City, a desire strongly expressed by the school board and administrative team there.

"It will be important that accomplishing that goal will also help Shelby-Rising City improve student achievement," said Kay. "Their district is growing in enrollment, so I anticipate some staffing and facility questions to arise during my first year."

He is looking forward to the opportunity of working on some new challenges and making a positive impact for the Shelby-Rising City schools and the community.

"It will be a new perspective that I feel prepared for, thanks to having a great mentor in Mr. Buchanan [PCS superintendent]," said Kay.

When it comes to favorite memories about his career with Perkins County Schools, Kay said the past few years have gone by quickly and he feels honored to have contributed to the football tradition as the school's coach.

"I'm very proud of the players who have worked hard and committed to the team," he said. As head coach, his team went 39-17 over the six years and won the last three district titles.

"I have enjoyed my role as AD [activities director] and seeing the growth of our students and their successes while a part of the Plainsmen family," said Kay.

Kay said he will miss working with the people of Perkins County.

"The school and community have a lot of great, supportive, and positive people, I feel like I have known some my entire life. I will miss working with them on a daily basis," he said. "In education, it really is about the people—students, colleagues, community—this has been what makes being a part of PCS great."

When Kay took the position at Perkins County Schools he was replacing Lance Wurst as head coach and taking over the classroom of Marci Vlasin for the 2007-08 term as business education teacher. He also coached wrestling.

He came to Perkins County after having coached in the Ogallala school system for 13 years and his family continued to live there while he served PCS. Prior to that, he was a pole vault, football and wrestling coach in North Platte.

When the Kays move eastward, his wife, Jeanne, may have some opportunities in the school system with her special education background, however, she is undecided about her work plans at this time.

The couple has a daughter, Jessica, who is a sophomore at Chadron State. She will transfer to the University of Nebraska at Kearney. Their daughter, Carlie, is a senior at Ogallala and will further her education in the Lincoln area. Daughter Emily will begin her junior year at Shelby-Rising City High School this fall.